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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000243

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DRL, IO, NEA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2008

TAGS: PHUM PREL IT UN HUMAN RIGHTS

SUBJECT: ITALY ON REFORMING UNHRC, UPCOMING HUMAN RIGHTS EVENT UNDER EU PRESIDENCY

REF: ROME 111 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: DCM EMIL SKODON, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. IN A JANUARY 13 COURTESY CALL, MFA UNDER SECRETARY FOR ASIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS MARGHERITA BONIVER TOLD

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CHARGE THAT ITALY SHARED THE U.S. CONCERN FOR REFORM OF THE

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UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (OTHER ISSUES SEPTEL). THE GOI WILL HOST A "MAJOR HUMAN RIGHTS EVENT" LATER THIS YEAR IN ITS CAPACITY AS EU PRESIDENT AND WOULD WELCOME SUGGESTIONS FOR POSSIBLE U.S. INVITEES. BONIVER HOPES TO MAKE A TRIP TO WASHINGTON IN THE NEAR FUTURE, WHEN SHE WOULD LIKE TO MEET DEPARTMENT COUNTERPARTS. END SUMMARY.

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION/LIBYA

¶12. (C) CHARGE RAISED THE ISSUE OF LIBYA'S CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE UNHRC. BONIVER NOTED SHE WOULD ATTEND THE OPENING SESSION AND THAT ITALY WOULD SEEK TO REGAIN ITS MEMBERSHIP ON THE COMMISSION. THE UNHRC NEEDS "PROFOUND REFORM," SHE ASSERTED. REVIEWING UPCOMING RESOLUTIONS, SHE FOUND SEVERAL ON AFRICAN COUNTRIES, FIVE AGAINST ISRAEL/PRO-PALESTINIAN, AND NOTHING ON CUBA. "THAT'S GROTESQUE," SHE EXCLAIMED. "WHAT IS THE POINT OF THIS KIND OF COMMISSION? WHERE IS THE BALANCE?" CHARGE NOTED THAT REFORM WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE UNDER A LIBYAN CHAIRMANSHIP. IT WAS EQUALLY GROTESQUE, HE REJOINED, TO HAVE A COUNTRY UNDER EVEN SUSPENDED UN SANCTIONS CHAIRING THE COMMISSION. BONIVER'S CHIEF OF STAFF, ALESSANDOR DI FRANCO (ALSO IN THE MEETING), CONFIRMED WITH CHARGE THAT THE U.S. WOULD ASK FOR A VOTE ON LIBYA AS CHAIR AND PREDICTED A SPLIT EU VOTE. BOTH BONIVER AND CHARGE AGREED ON THE DESIRABILITY OF REFORMING THE UNHRC, BUT THAT THIS WAS UNLIKELY TO HAPPEN SOON.

GOI TO HOST HUMAN RIGHTS EVENT

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¶13. (U) BONIVER SAID ITALY, AS EU PRESIDENT, WOULD HOST A MAJOR HUMAN RIGHTS EVENT IN MILAN IN SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER. THE THEME WOULD BE SEEKING TO BRIDGE THE CULTURAL DIVIDE BETWEEN ISLAM AND WESTERN DEMOCRACIES BY FOCUSING ON THE UNIVERSAL VALUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS. PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE MOSTLY NGOS, FORMER NOBEL PEACE PRIZE RECIPIENTS, "PEOPLE WHO CAN TALK ACROSS THE CULTURAL DIVIDE." BONIVER ENCOURAGED SUGGESTIONS FOR POSSIBLE U.S. INVITEES.

¶14. (U) BONIVER HOPES TO MAKE A TRIP TO WASHINGTON IN THE NEAR FUTURE (NO DATES PLANNED AT THIS TIME). SHE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN MEETING U/S DOBRIANSKY, U/S GROSSMAN, A/S KELLY, AND A/S CRANER. WE WILL ADVISE WHEN BONIVER INDICATES THE TRIP IS IN THE PLANNING STAGES.

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